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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES GOT ON ATTENDANCE AT SHARM
MEETINGS

Classified By: Ambassador Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkey is still weighing its level of attendance at the May 3-4 Sharm el-Sheikh meetings on Iraq, according to PM/FM foreign policy advisor Davutoglu. Turkey is still smarting from Iraq's decision not to hold the ministerials in Istanbul, and will press Iraqi FonMin Zebari for an explanation during his April 26 visit here before making a decision. While FonMin Gul's attendance is understandably unlikely now that he is gearing up to become President, we will continue to press the GOT to be represented at the ministerial level and not be lumped together with reprobates Iran and Syria. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador met April 25 with Turkish PM/FM foreign affairs advisor Davutoglu to urge ministerial-level participation at the May 3-4 ministerial meetings at Sharm el-Sheikh. He emphasized that Turkey must not allow itself to be grouped along with Syria and Iran as the standoffish ones, which would be bad for Iraq and for U.S.-Turkish relations. After complaining again about the ministerial timing and venue change from Istanbul, Davutoglu made clear that Turkey will participate. He said there are three possibilities for heading the Turkish delegation:

-- FonMin Gul. At best, this is only a very small chance. As the ruling party's candidate for President, he has too many other domestic responsibilities now, and the ministerial will fall between presidential voting rounds in the parliament. If he is approved by parliament on the first ballot on April 27 (this is unlikely), he would step down immediately as minister and then absolutely could not attend.

-- Another minister as stand-in. It is normal Turkish practice for ministers to substitute for one another; they don't tend to send the undersecretary, who is a career diplomat. It is highly unlikely that a new FonMin would be in place under any circumstances by May 3.

-- Turkey's Special Envoy for Iraq Celikkol.

¶3. (C) According to Davutoglu, PM Erdogan will decide on representation after Iraqi FonMin Zebari's April 26 visit to Ankara. The PM is adamant that Zebari must give an

accounting for how and why the venue changed from Istanbul. Turkey needs to know whether Iraq regards it as an enemy or as a friend.

¶4. (C) In addition, Turkey also wants to see action on the PKK. Davutoglu said that Ankara may insist that the communique coming out of Sharm make some specific reference to the PKK and that Turkey may want Iraq's commitment to this in advance. (Comment: This is blatant overreach and the Turks know it. End comment.)

¶5. (C) Davutoglu said that Iranian National Security Adviser Larijani, who is here for talks with Solana on the Iran nuclear issue, told the Turks April 25 that Iran still has not decided about its participation at Sharm. The Syrians have apparently told Ankara that they will do whatever the Turks do. Davutoglu underscored that the conference will be a failure if Iran, Syria and Turkey do not attend.

¶6. (C) Ambassador repeated to Davutoglu that most other countries are being represented at the ministerial level, and that it will mean a great deal to Secretary Rice and to the U.S. for Turkey to be represented at that level. While we understand the peculiar circumstances that Gul personally faces, it will be harmful for Iraq and for U.S.-Turkish relations if Turkey is seen as lumping itself together with Syria and Iran. Davutoglu said he would convey these points to Erdogan and Gul.

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WILSON